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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/978,158	10/16/2001	Harpreet Singh Sawhney	SAR 13924	4034

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EXAMINER

TUCKER, WESLEY J

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2623

DATE MAILED: 10/26/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

09/978,158

Applicant(s)

SAWHNEY ET AL.

Examiner

Wes Tucker

Art Unit

2623

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 07 September 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 16 October 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- \* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) ☒ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 9-7-05.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

## **DETAILED ACTION**

### ***Response to Arguments***

1. Applicant's after-final response, filed September 7th 2005 has been entered and made of record. An interview summary is also attached to this action detailing the phone discussion between Applicant's representative Kenneth Nigon Reg. No. 31,549 and Examiners Tucker and Bali, of the after-final response with regard to the final rejection previously presented. In light of that interview the after-final request has been considered.

2. Applicant has withdrawn claims 16-27 in response to the previous restriction requirement. Claims 1, 3-6 and 12 were previously amended. Claims 1-15 remain pending.

3. The arguments presented by Applicant in regard to amended independent claim 1 presented in the above-mentioned interview are found persuasive for at least the following reasons. Accordingly a new rejection has been presented. The previously presented final rejection has been withdrawn and this action is accordingly non-final.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the

Art Unit: 2623

invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 1-2, 5, 8-12, 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of [ChenWilliams93] (S.E. Chen and L. Williams, *View Interpolation for Image Synthesis*, ACM-SIGGRAPH, 1993) and U.S. Patent 6,469,710 to Shum et al.

With regard to claim 1, Chen discloses in a system using a plurality of fixed imagers covering a scene, a method to create a high quality virtual image, in real time, as seen from a virtual viewpoint of the scene (p. 281, left column, paragraph 1).

Chen further discloses step a) selecting at least two images corresponding to at least two of the plurality of fixed imagers to be used in creating the high quality virtual image (Section 2 *View Morphing* paragraph 1, sentence 3). These images are considered captured by a set of corresponding cameras.

Chen further discloses step b) creating at least two depth maps corresponding to the at least two images (Chen, page 280, left column, paragraph 1, lines 4-7 and paragraph 2, lines 4-6). Here Chen discloses that range data is generated using ranging devices. This is interpreted as depth mapping.

Chen further discloses step c) determining at least two sets of warp parameters using the at least two depth maps corresponding to said at least two images, each set of warp parameters corresponding to warping one of the at least two images to the virtual viewpoint (page 280, left column, paragraph 1, lines 4-7 and page 281, left

column, paragraph 2, lines 4-18). Chen discloses determining morph maps wherein the two images are morphed to one another and the morphed images are interpolated or in a way merged to form an image corresponding to a virtual viewpoint in between the viewpoints used to capture the images.

Chen does not disclose the feature of step d) wherein the two generated warped images are each warped to an image representing the virtual viewpoint. The difference in Chen and the presently claimed invention is that Chen uses two warped images warped from one view point to the other and then the two warped images are used to interpolate an image representing a virtual viewpoint (Section 2, View Morphing, paragraph 2, lines 5-7), while the presently claimed invention generates two warped image representing a virtual viewpoint and then merges the two warped images. The reference of U.S. Patent 6,469,710 to Shum et al. is cited to teach this feature. Shum teaches using 3D model and multiple images from multiple viewpoints to be used (column 6, lines 50-55) to create an image by combining several warped images (column 3, lines 1-30 and Fig. 1).

Chen discloses the step e) of merging the at least two warped images to create the high quality virtual image.(column 2, lines 50-67). Chen teaches that the images are warped to a view point and then the warped images are weighted and combined to produce a final virtual viewpoint image in a blending process making it possible to fill in spaces that were occluded in one warped image and not in another (column 2, lines 50-67). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to use the warping and mapping process of as taught by Shum in order to

create a better image corresponding to a virtual viewpoint in combination with the image warping taught by Chen.

With regard to claim 12, the discussion of claim 1 applies.

With regard to claim 2 Chen discloses the step of selecting the virtual viewpoint by an operator (p.279, right column, lines 1-2).

*The following is in regard to Claim 5 and 15.* The range data (depth map) associated with each of the input images can be obtained according a variety of different techniques. One method suggested by [ChenWilliams93] is to obtain the range data using ranging sensors ([ChenWilliams93] page 280, left column, paragraph 2, lines 4-6). Though not explicitly disclosed in [ChenWilliams93], the following are clearly inherent aspects of such a configuration are clearly inherent:

- (5.a.) Mounting the depth (ranging) sensors viewing the scene coincident with the fixed imagers. It is typically assumed that each pixel of an image is associated with a visible point in the three-dimensional space of a given scene. Each pixel is thus associated with a particular depth – the depth of the scene point. Generally, this depth is measured relative to the center-of-projection (COP) of the

corresponding imager or viewpoint<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, if the aim is to generate range data from the COP of an imager to the viewed scene using depth sensors, then it is necessary that the depth sensors be mounted in close proximity (coincident, if feasible) to the location of the imager.

- (5.b.) Selecting at least two depth sensors corresponding to the images.
- (5.c.) Measuring a plurality of depth values (this is what depth sensor do!) with the depth sensors. As stated above, the depth values are required for each pixel (i.e. "the plurality of image coordinates") of the given images to determine the aforesaid pixel-to-pixel correspondences. See steps (1.b.)-(1.c.) above.
- (5.d.) As stated above, a depth map (range data) is obtained for each of the input images. See steps (1.b.)-(1.c.) above. Clearly, in a configuration that utilizes depth sensors, these depth maps would consist of the measured depth values.

It has thus been shown that an implementation of [ChenWilliams93], which utilizes ranging sensors to derive the range data of the given images, inherently comprises all substantive elements as set forth in Claim 5.

With regard to claim 15, the discussion of claim 5 applies.

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<sup>1</sup> This, of course, assumes a pinhole camera model. This assumption is made by both the Applicant and [ChenWilliams93]. A pinhole camera is, for all intents and purposes, located at its center-of-projection.

*The following is in regard to Claims 8-11.* [ChenWilliams93] can synthesize novel views from images acquired at multiple viewpoints. [ChenWilliams93], therefore, supports multiple cameras (imagers). The authors pose no limit on the number of input images, other than there be at least two. Indeed, [ChenWilliams93] describes view interpolation primarily within the context of a two camera/two input image system (e.g. [ChenWilliams93], page 281, left column, paragraph 1) – that is, a system where exactly two images are selected. Also, a three camera system (a system where exactly three images are selected) is illustrated in Fig. 7 of [ChenWilliams93].

Assuming a three camera system (a system where exactly three images are selected ), Fig. 7 of [ChenWilliams93] clearly shows exactly three images that correspond to three fixed imagers (e.g. View1, View2, and View3) arranged in a triangular fashion. This configuration is, of course, a geometric pattern of fixed imagers.

6. Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of [ChenWilliams93] and U.S. Patent 6,469,710 to Shum et al. and further in view of [Faugeras95] (O. Faugeras et al., *3-D Reconstruction of Urban Scenes from Sequences of Images*, INRIA, 1995).



*The following is in regard to Claim 3.* As shown above, [ChenWilliams93] and Shum satisfy all limitations of Claim 1 and therefore meets the limitations including the steps b-f in Claim 3 which repeat respective steps a-e in Claim 1. However, [ChenWilliams93] and Shum do not disclose selecting the virtual viewpoint based on tracking at least one feature in the scene.

[Faugeras95] discloses a method to reconstruct a three-dimensional model of a static environment viewed by one or several cameras whose motions or relative positions are unknown and whose intrinsic parameters are also unknown and may vary ([Faugeras95], Introduction, paragraph 1). The problem solved by [Faugeras95], though more in the realm of image-based modeling, is nonetheless similar to that of [ChenWilliams93]. [Faugeras95] suggests tracking a set of feature points through a given sequence of images. If a given feature point can be tracked all the way between two of the given views, a correspondence is established between those views. In this manner, a subset of the given set of images are used to establish feature correspondences between images. See [Faugeras95] Section 2 *Robust Recovery of the Geometry*, paragraph 1, sentence 1 and Section 2.1, paragraph 3, sentences 1-2.

Given the teachings of [Faugeras95], it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the Applicant's claimed invention, to select a subset of the given images in [ChenWilliams93] based on whether those images contain a set of tracked feature points. The advantages of such a modification are (at least) twofold. First, the resultant methodology would be capable of synthesizing novel views of designated feature(s) in the observed scene. Secondly, correspondences (and,

presumably, all subsequent steps) are derived only for the reserved frames. As a result, the computational burden is reduced.

7. Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of [ChenWilliams93] and U.S. Patent 6,469,710 to Shum et al. and further in view of [Trucco98] (E. Trucco and A. Verri, *Introductory Techniques for Computer Vision* © 1998, Prentice-Hall, Chapters 7-8).

*The following is in regard to Claim 4.* As shown above, [ChenWilliams93] and Shum satisfy all limitations of Claim 1. [ChenWilliams93] further suggests determining the depth maps associated with each of the given images using photogrammetric techniques ([ChenWilliams93] page 280, left column, paragraph 2, lines 4-6). Although these techniques are well-known, [ChenWilliams93] does not propose using any particular photogrammetric technique.

Generally speaking, photogrammetry is the study in which the three-dimensional coordinates of points on an object are determined by measurements made in two or more photographic images taken from different positions. The problem of stereo vision belongs to the field of photogrammetry. The essence of stereo vision lies in solving the *stereo correspondence problem* ([Trucco98] Section 7.1.1, paragraph 1).

As shown in [Trucco98] ([Trucco98] Section 7.1.1, paragraph 2, lines 1-6), the *disparity map* represents a solution of the stereo correspondence problem, assuming

the geometry of the stereo system is known<sup>2</sup>. As stated previously, disparity is inversely proportional to depth. See also [Trucco98], page 144. The disparity map and depth map are, therefore, trivially related. Given the suggestion of [ChenWilliams93] to use photogrammetry to derive the depth maps, the teachings of [Trucco98] with regard to such a method, and the fact that [ChenWilliams93] presupposes *a priori* knowledge of the *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* camera parameters<sup>3</sup> ([Trucco98] page 144: *Parameters of a Stereo System*), it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the Applicant's claimed invention, to derive the depth (disparity) maps via stereo correspondence.

Under certain constraints, it can be shown that the *optical flow*<sup>3</sup> between a set of images and the disparity (hence, depth) are approximations of one another. To illustrate this, the notion of a *motion field* is introduced. The motion field is the two-dimensional vector field of velocities of the image points, induced by the relative motion between the viewing camera and the observed scene ([Trucco98], page 183). This relative motion may manifest itself as the viewing camera moving about a static scene. For static scenes, movement of the camera about the scene is equivalent to capturing the scene from a plurality of fixed cameras located at discrete locations along the path of the camera. The derivation of the motion field induced by a camera moving relative to a static scene is thus conceptually similar to the stereo correspondence problem for pairs of cameras fixed along the path of the moving camera. Indeed, the motion field

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<sup>2</sup> This is key assumption in [ChenWilliams93]. See [ChenWilliams93], Section 2.1, paragraph 1, sentence 3.

<sup>3</sup> The optical flow is defined as the apparent motion of the image brightness pattern.

Art Unit: 2623

coincides with the stereo disparity map when spatial and temporal differences between frames are sufficiently small ([Trucco98], page 185: *Stereo Disparity Map and Motion Field*). Returning to the discussion of optical flow, [Trucco98] points out that, if one assumes a globally illuminated scene of Lambertian (diffusive) surfaces, then optical flow is an approximation of the motion field ([Trucco98], page 195: *Optical Flow and Motion Field*). Taking into account the previous observations, the following can be concluded. If a set of input images depicts a globally illuminated scene of Lambertian (diffusive) surfaces, from a corresponding set of tightly spaced and spatially coherent viewpoints, then the disparity map and optical flow field are approximations of one another<sup>4,5</sup>. These observations imply that, under the first and second constraints, the derivation of the disparity (depth) maps, using photogrammetric methods, involves:

- (4.a.) Calculating a plurality of optical flow values (disparity) between the set of input images.

The disparity of an image pixel is actually the parallax<sup>6</sup> caused by viewing the corresponding scene point from different viewpoints. Disparity in image pairs is often referred to as binocular parallax. Thus, in calculating the disparity of an image pixel, one has also calculated a parallax value associated with the pixel. Given this observation, the derivation of the disparity (depth) maps further includes:

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the images are given and can be presumed to have been captured simultaneously. In this case, the temporal difference between images is negligible.

<sup>5</sup> For the sake of brevity, the constraint of small spatial and temporal differences between frames will be referred to as the “first constraint”; and the “second constraint” will refer to the assumption of global illumination and Lambertian (diffusive) reflectivity for all scene surfaces.

Calculating a plurality of parallax values (disparity) corresponding  
(4.b.) to pixels (i.e. a plurality of image coordinates) in the given input  
images from optical flow values (disparity).

[ChenWilliams93] satisfies both the first constraint ([ChenWilliams93] page 280, left column, paragraph 1, sentence 1) and the second constraint ([ChenWilliams93] page 280, right column, paragraph 1, lines 8-12). Therefore, the derivation of the depth maps implies steps (4.a.)-(4.b.) above and, thus, the step of:

Calculating the depth (disparity) maps using the image pixels and  
(4.c.) the parallax (disparity) values.

That is, steps (4.a.)-(4.c.) are implicit to the calculation of the depth maps by stereo reconstruction in the method of [ChenWilliams93].

8. Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of [ChenWilliams93] and U.S. Patent 6,469,710 to Shum et al. and further in view of [Rogina01] (*U.S. Patent Application Publication 2001/0043737*, assigned to Rogina et al.).

*The following is in regard to Claim 7.* As shown above, [ChenWilliams93] satisfies all limitations of Claim 1. However, [ChenWilliams93] does not disclose

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<sup>6</sup> Parallax is the apparent displacement or the difference in apparent location of an object as seen from two different viewpoints not on a straight line with the object.

selecting the input images based on a proximity of the virtual viewpoint to the viewpoints corresponding to the input images.

[Rogina01] discloses a method of providing an image from an arbitrary virtual viewpoint. In that method, a plurality of discrete two-dimensional images are acquired, each corresponding to the image of a scene observed from a plurality of discrete viewpoints on a predetermined viewpoint locus ([Rogina01] column 2, paragraph [0011], sentences 1-2; see also Fig. 1). In a process analogous to [ChenWilliams93], [Rogina01] uses an input viewpoint (base viewpoint) to map from transform images into the virtual viewpoint image ([Rogina01] column 2, paragraph [0011], last sentence). The base viewpoint is selected from the discrete viewpoint locus. According to [Rogina01], it is desirable to selected a base viewpoint close to the virtual viewpoint. See [Rogina01] column 2, paragraph [0011], sentences 5-6. Note that [Rogina01] also uses adjacent viewpoints in the view interpolation ([Rogina01], Abstract, lines 10-14). In that sense, the selection of the base viewpoint entails a selection of additional adjacent view points (which should also be close to the virtual viewpoint) – that is, at least two proximate images are selected.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the Applicant's claimed invention, incorporate this simple selection process into [ChenWilliams93]. According to [Rogina01], selecting the viewpoints closest to the virtual viewpoint alleviates skewing and accurately reflects occlusions of distant objects by close objects ([Rogina01] column 13, paragraph [0102]).

9. Claim 6 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of [ChenWilliams93] and U.S. Patent 6,469,710 to Shum et al., in view of [LuoMaître90] (W. Luo and H. Maître, *Using Surface Model to Correct and Fit Disparity Data in Stereo Vision*, IEEE, 1990).

*The following is in regard to Claim 6.* As shown above, [ChenWilliams93] satisfies all limitations of Claim 1. However, [ChenWilliams93] does not create the aforementioned depth (disparity) maps by:

- (6.a.) Separating the given set of images into a plurality of segments, wherein pixels of each segment have substantially homogenous values.
- (6.b.) Calculating a depth value corresponding to each segment.
- (6.c.) Optimizing the depth values corresponding to each segment.
- (6.d.) Creating the aforementioned depth maps from the plurality of optimized depth values

[LuoMaître90] disclose a method for stereo reconstruction<sup>7</sup> ([LuoMaître90] Abstract) comprising the steps of:

- (6.a.) The images are segmented into regions of substantially uniform values (gray values). See [LuoMaître90] Section 3.1, item (b) and Abstract, sentence 3.

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<sup>7</sup> Recall from above that stereo reconstruction yields a disparity or depth map associated with a given image.

- (6.b.) The depth value (disparity) of each segment is calculated. See [LuoMaître90] Section 3.1, item (a) and second to last paragraph, sentence 2.
- (6.c.) The disparities of each segment (referred, henceforth, to as the disparity map of a segment) are optimized by the following:
1. Fitting a plane to the disparity map of each segment. See [LuoMaître90] Section 3.1, second to last paragraph, sentence 4.
  2. The goodness-of-fit is determined. See [LuoMaître90], Section 3.1, last paragraph.
  3. Errors are corrected ([LuoMaître90], Section 3.1, last paragraph, last sentence and Section 3.2).
  4. If the fit is still unacceptable the segment is subdivided. See Section 3.3 of [LuoMaître90].
- (6.d.) If the fitted planar model is acceptable for a given segment, it is fit to the measured disparity map. The fitted plane then becomes the “optimized” disparity map for the given segment. See [LuoMaître90] Section 3.4. This is clearly done for all segments in each of the input images so as to obtain a complete disparity (depth) map for each of the images.

The primary advantage of [LuoMaître90] is that fitted plane can provide a dense set of disparity values (depths) from a sparse set of measured disparities. Furthermore,



Art Unit: 2623

as a mathematical model, the fitted plane has sub-pixel resolution. Taking this into account, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the Applicant's claimed invention, to derive the depth (disparity) maps of [ChenWilliams93] according to the teachings of [LuoMaître90].

*The following is in regard to Claim 14.* As shown above, [ChenWilliams93] satisfies all limitations of Claim 12. As just discussed with respect to Claim 6, [LuoMaître90] is a segmentation-based method for disparity (depth) calculation. Note that the brightness value is never used in [LuoMaître90], aside from its use in evaluating the homogeneity of image regions. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the Applicant's claimed invention, to combine [LuoMaître90] and [ChenWilliams93], in the manner suggested above, and further extend [LuoMaître90] to accommodate color images.

10. Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of [ChenWilliams93] and U.S. Patent 6,469,710 to Shum et al., in view of [Saito99] (H. Saito et al., *Appearance-Based Virtual View Generation of Temporally-Varying Events from Multi-Camera Images in the 3D Room*, IEEE, 1999).

*The following is in regard to Claim 13.* As shown above, [ChenWilliams93] satisfies all limitations of Claim 12. [ChenWilliams93], however, does not disclose using a view-based volumetric mapping means to create depth maps of the images.

[Saito99] proposes an "appearance [view]-based" virtual view generation method ([Saito99] Abstract). Depth images are derived for each camera using a multi-baseline stereo methodology ([Saito99] Section 4.1, paragraph 1). These depth images are merged to form a three-dimensional volumetric model ([Saito99] Section 4.1, paragraph 2). Using the volumetric model to resolve occlusions, [Saito99] derive a disparity (depth) map for each of the input views ([Saito99] Section 4.2 and Fig. 7). Clearly, in this sense, [Saito99] represents a view-based volumetric mapping means for creating depth (disparity) maps.

This volumetric process is superior because it successfully resolves occluded regions in all of the given views ([Saito99], Abstract, sentences 4-5). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the Applicant's claimed invention, to use the method of [Saito99] to create depth images for each of the input images of [ChenWilliams93].

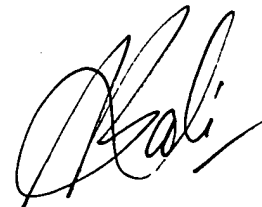
11. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Wes Tucker whose telephone number is 571-272-7427. The examiner can normally be reached on 9AM-5PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jingge Wu can be reached on 571-272-7429. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Wes Tucker

10-20-05

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vikram Bali', with a stylized, cursive script.

**VIKKRAM BALI  
PRIMARY EXAMINER**